

## VETERAN PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

VA and State Hospital Activities should be coordinated with the Hospital chairperson, Voluntary Services, and Recreation staff. CLC is the Community Living Center which was known as the Nursing Home Care Unit and may include short term rehab and Hospice units. Don't forget the local Nursing home Vets. Private nursing homes usually have a Recreation Director to work with. As a rule, VA hospitals have their outings during weekdays so as not to pay overtime. Plan your luncheons or other activities during work hours. Many VA's have homeless programs with a Domiciliary or family home. Be sure to include them and find out about their special needs.

1. Bingo. Veteran hospitals have all the materials. Procure Canteen books ahead of time to be used as prizes. You should have 4 or more volunteers.
2. Horse Racing, the staff will usually have a track, wooden horses and dice to move them. You'll need Canteen books to pay off win, place and show. 4 or more volunteers
3. Start an Adopt-A-Vet program for individuals in Nursing homes, VA, State hospitals, or community that don't have many relatives, visitors or are shut in. Give them certificates of adoption available through Grand Lodge. You can make up your own computer-generated certificates.
4. Sponsor small concerts at the CLC or hospital open area. Arrange through Volunteer services.
5. Sponsor fishing on piers, small lakes, commercial party fishing or member's boats.
6. Sponsor boat rides, and scenic cruises. Use a commercial tour boat, or members with boats or boat club membership could help.
7. Car show at the VA or at the assembly.
8. OEF/OIF events or welcome home. VA has an OEF/OIF coordinator. OND (Operation New Dawn- The current war in Afghanistan) returnees or send offs from local guard or reserve units can be held at the assembly. Have a picnic or party for their families while they are gone.
9. Have Vets come as an off station visit to assembly meals: Steaks, Picnics, Pig Roasts, Bar BQ's, Holidays, or any reason. Beware of Religious restrictions and hospital policy. Don't forget nursing homes and senior residences.

10. Fine dining event at the CLC/Nursing home. Have a special meal served by tuxedoed waiters. Cater this under hospital direction.
11. Bring in a band or have a DJ at the CLC. You may want to decorate with a special theme. Music should match the population of the CLC. Have as many knights as possible.
12. Christmas gifts. Gifts can be donated or use a Giving tree for specific Vets. Empty Stockings can be filled by Elk families. General gift program with donated money can procure cases of items can be ordered through Federated wholesale. Generally, no alcohol, glass or sharp items are permitted. Stores like Target and Wal-Mart may give you good prices or make donations.
13. Have the Easter Bunny visit the CLC or Nursing home and give sugar free candy.
14. Have clothing drives for the hospital Clothing store, or homeless veteran program.
15. Comfort Care kits for CLC or incoming patients. Dollar Store items
16. Special events for Elks November remembrance month, and National Salute to Veterans Hospital (Valentines) week in February. This may include volunteering for a Valentines for Veterans concert. This could include off station visits to the lodge for dinners. Do a hospital wide event as listed in #17
17. Hospital wide Hot Dog luncheons, Sub sandwiches, and Ice Cream socials. Meats should be beef for religious reasons. Ice cream in 3-gallon tubs may be ordered through the hospital. Toppings, spoons, dishes, scoops need to be brought into the event. A band or just a musician could make the event more festive.
18. Support and help man USO or Veteran lounges in airports.
19. Poker party with Canteen books to the winners with the most chips. You'll need dealers. Patients could choose Blackjack, Texas Hold'em, or Stud type poker.
20. Promote schools/youth to make cards and/or decorations for Veterans Day, Memorial Day and other Holidays. Work with members who teach to make it part of their lessons. Offer to deliver the cards and decorations.
21. High Schools could assign Oral Histories and have students find out what the Veteran did, where they were stationed, and other stories. This would be especially good for Nursing Homes.

22. Coffee Cart with Cookies and bottled water. Go room to room, or in a commons area.
23. Sponsor therapeutic Horseback riding. Arrange with a local stable.
24. Sponsor events for POW meetings, which are held at the VA. Sponsor lunch, snacks, or provide entertainment as a band, comedian, or magician.
26. Baseball, football or other sports game outings. Include College or semi-pro leagues in your area. Also, Zoos and other local attractions.
27. Bowling and pizza parties. Work with a local ally.
28. Monthly birthday parties with balloons, cake and ice cream. Special entertainment or musicians can add to the festivity.
29. Sponsor Art/Craft contests, Work with art therapist, provide ribbons. Donate to the Creative Arts festival
30. Christmas dinner or party. Cater food or have them to the assembly
31. Sponsor Super bowl, or All-Star game party, as well as sports rivalries as Army-Navy, USC-Notre Dame, Texas-Texas AM etc.
32. Sponsor New Year's Eve party. Bring Munchies, snacks, canapés and nonalcoholic champagne.
33. Coffee and donuts after religious services. Work with Chaplain Service.
34. Sponsor Wii sports tournaments.
35. Theme Parties: St. Patrick's, Valentines, Easter, Christmas in July, Fourth of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, Luau, Mardi Gras, Sea Cruise, Stay-Cation, Cinco de Mayo, Kentucky Derby, Baseball Opening day,
36. Bring in a Bean Bag toss game and hold tournaments.
37. Karaoke. Bring in a Karaoke machine with a good singer.
38. Segway tours of cities or parks.

39. Trivia, sports, Military, or general knowledge. Give canteen books as prizes.
40. Sponsor the moving wall. Have it at the VA or Lodge for community access.
41. Donate/ man popcorn machine in commons area for our patients.
42. Work with National Cemeteries by volunteering, donating for flags, and Wreaths Across America. Do your own wreath laying ceremony.
43. Decorate Veteran graves in local cemeteries with flags or grave markers/medallions.
44. Work with Patriot riders for funeral processions of fallen soldiers. Feed them and have Lodge motorcyclists join them. Present an engraved medallion (from Grand Lodge) to the family.
45. Sponsor a Veteran job fair by working with community or private employment services.
46. Donate cookies, or cases of fruit to Veteran homeless shelters or transitional housing of the VA.
47. Do something special for patriotic days: Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, Marine Birthday, Patriot Day, Pearl Harbor day, Armed Forces Day, POW/MIA Day.
48. Pass out small Desk Flags with stands to Vets in hospitals or nursing homes, especially on Flag Day.
49. Give flowers or Candy to nursing stations as a thank you for their patriotic work.
50. Support Stand Downs for homeless Veterans. Offer to donate lodge, Donate money, articles of clothing, toiletries, and playing cards from the card program. Volunteer to host and escort. These events can be from 1 to 3 days and offer medical, clothing and legal aid.
51. Have a collection of gently used clothing for Veteran homeless shelters in metropolitan areas, or new items for the VA, State homes, and nursing homes.
52. Tea for women veterans. Check hospital for food policy.

53. Get involved with female Vets program at the VA. Some have Baby showers or donate gifts of Baby items.
54. Work with the hospital Chairman in putting on the monthly Elk program.
55. Participate in the Army of hope by adopting the family of an overseas soldier and help in Mowing, shoveling snow, and general repairs. Invite them to the lodge for a meal.
56. Army of Hope by adopting an overseas unit of a members Son or Daughter or Grandson or Granddaughter. Send snacks, toiletries, or other comfort items.
57. Form a choral group or recruit one from schools or churches to serenade them with patriotic songs and classical standards from the past. Do Christmas caroling, St. Patrick's Day Irish songs.
58. Amateur, Veteran, Variety show put on by volunteers, staff and patients.
59. Volunteer at community-based VA clinics by offering coffee, food, and being a morale booster.
60. Support Wounded Warrior by sponsoring Hunting or Fishing trips. Work with sportsman's clubs for skeet or target shooting. Contact them through the internet.
61. Sponsor or help with horticulture projects as serenity gardens and raised bed gardening. Get the Master Gardeners association, garden clubs, or county extension service to help.
62. Collect and salt down deer hides for the leather program. Videos are available through the State chairman.
63. Create a worn and old flag burning ceremony or do one with the American Legion.
64. Help recruit for pet therapy programs where members can visit hospitals and nursing homes with their pets.
65. Pizza parties for various hospital units. Think beyond CLC (nursing home) and offer to Psych, Alcohol Abuse, and day treatment units.
66. Do the Elks Flag Day service at the VA, nursing homes, or senior residences.

67. Google Homeless Veterans and your city's name to see if there are nongovernment facilities to support.

68. Promote regular volunteering of the members at VA and State facilities.

69. Recognize outstanding volunteer work with Veterans with an American Patriot plaque that your awards provider may be able to make up.

70. Collect new toys and books for the women's clinic

71. Every VA has a program for former POW's. It is usually administered by a social worker. These are from the surrounding communities and meet once a month.

#### Possible POW Programs

- Music/entertainment during meeting time. One man band, magic, or comedy
- Visit Lodge for a dinner or luncheon. Private or with CLC
- Catered Luncheon at VA. Pizza, Subs or chicken
- Sponsor fruit/cookies at meeting
- Bowling and Pizza

72. National VA cemeteries offer free burial to any Veteran and their spouse. They are administered by an Advisory Counsel and government administrators.

#### Volunteering at National Cemeteries

- Color Guard (Veteran organizations only)
- Tour guides for presentations (training available)
- Guides to help people locate a grave
- Office help in answering phones and doing clerical work.
- Help on special days as Memorial and Veterans
- Supervise youth volunteers in gravestone cleaning. (Scouting Project)
- Flower bed weekly weeding
- Old flower pick up from grave sites
- Flag maintenance
- Donation of Flags presented to Widows or families to replace entrance flags. Certificates of appreciation will be given

11. Wreaths Across America is a national organization to put wreaths on veteran graves. To keep it local call the Cemetery

XX. Do fund raising for large items

*Casino night, Poker Run, Patriot Quilt Raffle, Spaghetti Dinner, Golf Outing, Bike rides, 5K run/walk, Silent Auction, Yard sale of donated items and rent tables for others, Bake sale at Lodge events or dinners, Breakfasts, Chili cook offs, Polar plunge, Wild Game dinner, Support the Troops Party/dinner*

XX. Donations: Electronic Readers, Satellite Radio. To USO, To Wounded Warrior, Handheld and Wii Electronic Games, Honor flights, Stand downs, Phone cards, Coats and sweaters, Toiletries, Wreaths across America, Fisher House (family housing for patients), Chaplain Service. Hospital Activities: Golden Age games, Adaptive Sports, Wheel Chair games, Paralympics, Valentines for Veterans concert (possible matching funds from Grand Lodge). Pool Table. Barber Chair. Ramps for disabled Vets, as well as other changes to accommodate Vets with disabilities. National Cemeteries wreath program, or for flags.